

I CLAIM:

1. A sandal comprising:
a sole comprising (a) a lower sole, (b) a flexible upper sole, and (c) a plurality of unamalgamated beads disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole; and
at least one strap connected to the sole and configured to secure the sole to the bottom of a user's foot.
2. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the beads that are disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole are enclosed in a thin and flexible inner bag, the bag being disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole.
3. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the upper sole is made of fabric.
4. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the upper sole is made of stretch jersey fabric.
5. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded thermoplastic beads.
6. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded polystyrene beads having an average diameter between about two thirds and about one mm, and wherein the plurality of beads comprises at least ten thousand beads.

7. The sandal of claim 6, wherein the upper sole is made of a lightweight fabric.
8. The sandal of claim 7, wherein the beads that are disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole are enclosed in an inner bag made of a lightweight fabric, the bag being disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole.
9. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the at least one strap is stuffed with unamalgamated, roughly spherical, expanded thermoplastic beads.
10. The sandal of claim 1, wherein the at least one strap is stuffed with unamalgamated, roughly spherical, expanded polystyrene beads having an average diameter between about two thirds and about one mm.
11. A shoe comprising:
a sole comprising (a) a lower sole, (b) a flexible upper sole, and (c) a plurality of unamalgamated small beads disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole; and
an upper connected to the sole and configured to secure the sole to the bottom of a user's foot.
12. The shoe of claim 11, wherein the beads that are disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole are enclosed in a thin and flexible inner bag, the bag being disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole.

13. The shoe of claim 11, wherein the upper sole is made of fabric.
14. The shoe of claim 11, wherein the upper sole is made of cotton jersey stretch knit fabric.
15. The shoe of claim 11, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded thermoplastic beads.
16. The shoe of claim 11, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded polystyrene beads having an average diameter between about two thirds and about one mm, and wherein the plurality of beads comprises at least ten thousand beads.
17. The shoe of claim 16, wherein the upper sole is made of a lightweight fabric.
18. The shoe of claim 17, wherein the beads that are disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole are enclosed in an inner bag made of a lightweight fabric, the bag being disposed between the upper sole and the lower sole.
19. An article of footwear comprising:
 - a lower sole having an upper surface;
 - sidewalls having an inner surface, wherein the sidewalls are connected to the lower sole so as to form a recess that is bounded by the inner surface of the sidewalls and the upper surface of the lower sole;
 - a plurality of unamalgamated small beads disposed in the recess;

a thin and flexible upper sole disposed on top of the beads and arranged to retain the beads within the recess; and

wherein the beads are free to shift around within the recess when pressure is applied to the beads through the upper sole.

20. The article of footwear of claim 19, wherein:

- (a) the recess occupies an area that is at least half as large as the area of the upper sole,
- (b) at least one part of the recess is at least one about one quarter inch deep, and
- (c) the plurality of beads comprises at least ten thousand beads.

21. The article of footwear of claim 20, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded polystyrene beads having an average diameter between about two thirds and about one mm.

22. The article of footwear of claim 21, wherein the beads are enclosed in a bag made of a lightweight fabric, and the flexible upper sole retains the beads within the recess by retaining the bag within the recess.

23. The article of footwear of claim 21, further comprising at least one strap connected to at least one of the lower sole, the sidewalls, and the upper sole, wherein the at least one strap is adapted to hold the upper sole against the bottom of a user's foot.

24. The article of footwear of claim 21, further comprising an upper connected to at least one of the lower sole, the sidewalls, and the upper sole, wherein the upper is adapted to hold the upper sole against the bottom of a user's foot.

25. The article of footwear of claim 19, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded thermoplastic beads.

26. The article of footwear of claim 19, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded polystyrene beads having an average diameter between about two thirds and about one mm, and wherein the volume of beads includes at least ten thousand beads.

27. An article of footwear comprising:
a volume of unamalgamated small beads;
a lower sole disposed beneath the volume of beads; and
a flexible covering disposed above the volume of beads,
wherein the beads are retained between the lower sole and the flexible covering, and
wherein, when the article of footwear is worn by a person that is standing or walking, the volume of beads bears at least some of the weight of the person.

28. The article of footwear of claim 27, wherein the beads are enclosed in a thin and flexible inner bag, the bag being disposed between the lower sole and the flexible covering.

29. The article of footwear of claim 27, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded thermoplastic beads.

30. The article of footwear of claim 27, wherein the beads are roughly spherical expanded polystyrene beads having an average diameter between about two thirds and about one mm, and wherein the volume of beads includes at least ten thousand beads.